

Justice and State Depts. at Odds In Assessments on Israeli Spying

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WASHINGTON, June 9 — Officials of the State Department and the Justice Department made conflicting statements today about the extent of Israeli spying in the United States. The statements brought additional confusion to an issue that has already strained American-Israeli relations.

Apparently trying to mollify the Israeli Government, the State Department said that the United States had "no evidence of any espionage ring involving Israeli officials" other than those already named as unindicted co-conspirators of Jonathan Jay Pollard, who has pleaded guilty to spying for Israel. The department said Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d had approved the statement.

Evidence of Spying Cited

But late in the day, the Justice Department formally denied that Mr. Meese had given his approval.

"Mr. Meese did not approve the statement," said Patrick Korten, a Justice Department spokesman. "It contains a reference to an ongoing investigation, about which we would never comment." Mr. Korten would not discuss details of the case.

Department officials said privately that there was indeed evidence of wider Israeli spying in the United States, and that the State Department had misstated the facts.

Senior Administration officials had said Thursday that Mr. Pollard was giving the Justice Department information about a number of espionage operations involving Israelis and other foreigners.

Shultz and Meese Met

The confusion, one Administration source said, resulted from a misunderstanding by middle-level officials at the State Department who believed that their counterparts at the Justice Department had approved the statement. There was a meeting this morning between Mr. Meese and Secretary of State George P. Shultz, but details of what went on at the meeting could not be obtained.

The Government has also issued conflicting statements as to whether the Israeli Government has been cooperating fully in the case. William H. Webster, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other Justice and White House officials have recently faulted Israel for "selective cooperation," in Mr. Webster's words.

Bill Baker, an F.B.I. spokesman,

said today that Mr. Webster stood by his remarks. "We will stand by the comments," he said.

But today Bernard Kalb, the State Department spokesman, said, "Quotes from unidentified sources are entitled to no weight and these and other uninformal statements do not represent the Administration's views."

Asserting that he was speaking for the entire United States Government, Mr. Kalb praised the Israeli Government, saying that "the indictment and successful prosecution was made possible through the cooperation of the Government of Israel."

An official in the White House press office said that Mr. Kalb's statement had been "coordinated" with the White House in an effort to secure a statement the entire Administration agreed to.

The State Department statement was carefully worded to say that there was no evidence of any further Israeli "officials" being involved in spying. But the White House official left open the possibility that Israelis who are not Government officials might still be implicated.

Within hours of Mr. Kalb's claim to be speaking for the entire Administration, some Justice Department officials were expressing surprise and anger.

No Evidence, Strong Reasons

"I don't know what they think they're doing over there," one Federal law-enforcement official said of the State Department. "They're going to look silly." Another official said that while it was literally true that there was no hard evidence to implicate other Israeli officials in espionage in this country, there were strong reasons to suspect the existence of other spy activity.

When told of the Justice Department reservations about the statement, a senior State Department official said: "The statement was signed off on by Ed Meese. And that is good enough for us."

After being told of Mr. Meese's denial, the State Department official had no further comment.

The State Department statement was issued in response to criticism leveled Sunday by Prime Minister Shimon Peres of Israel. He expressed concern that there were some in the United States who were seeking "to foul the atmosphere" between the two countries.

He also repeated his government's contention that Israel had cooperated in the Pollard investigation, and that the espionage ring was unauthorized and contrary to Israeli policy. He said also that Israel would continue to cooperate with the American investigation.

One Surprising Indictment

Last week, in connection with the guilty pleas of Mr. Pollard and his wife, Anne Henderson Pollard, to different charges in connection with spying activities, the Justice Department listed four Israelis as co-conspirators, but did not indict them.

Three of the four were known to have been involved last November when the Pollards first were arrested. They are Rafael Eitan, a veteran intelligence agent; Joseph Yagur, the science attaché at the Israeli Consulate in New York, and Irit Erb, a secretary in the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

But the fourth, Air Force Brig. Gen. Aviam Sella, was a surprise. He was identified as Mr. Pollard's first "handler," and his involvement only became known when Mr. Pollard provided evidence as part of his plea bargaining. All four are now in Israel.

Several Administration officials have expressed skepticism that someone of General Sella's stature could have been involved in an unauthorized intelligence operation without the approval of senior officials in the Government while studying as a graduate student in New York.

State Department Statement

A State Department official said today's statement was drafted by Abraham D. Sofaer, the department's legal adviser, who led a joint team from the State and Justice Departments to Israel last December to question Mr. Eitan and others known at the time to have been involved in the espionage case.